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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5497

INFO RUFHLG/AMCONSUL LENINGRAD 5875

BT

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 02142

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR

TAGS: PREL, EAIR, UR, US

SUBJECT: SOVIET INTEREST IN PRESERVING SPECIAL FLIGHTS
- AGREEMENT

REF: (A) MOSCOW 0993, (B) STATE 50065

1. (C - ENTIRE TEXT.)

2. THIS MESSAGE CONTAINS AN ACTION REQUEST AT PARA. 5.

3. DURING HIS FEBRUARY 15 LUNCHEON WITH DOBRYNIN, AMBASSADOR RAISED THE QUESTION OF MFA'S DENIALS OF THE SPECIAL FLIGHTS TO AND FROM STOCKHOLM. DOBRYNIN'S RESPONSE TRACKED VERY CLOSELY WITH WHAT MFA/USA DEPUTY MIKOL'CHAK TOLD A/DCM THREE WEEKS AGO (REFTEL): THE SOVIETS COUNTED BOTH DENIALS AS REFUSAL OF A SINGLE TRIP AND, BY IMPLICATION, RETALIATION FOR GROMYKO'S ABORTED U.S. FLIGHT. LIKE MIKOL'CHAK, DOBRYNIN SEEMED TO IMPLY THAT THE SOVIETS WERE PREPARED TO PRESERVE THE SPECIAL FLIGHTS AGREEMENT, AND SOUGHT OUR ASSURANCES THAT WE WOULD HONOR IT BY RECEIVING FLIGHTS AS WE HAD IN THE PAST.

4. DCM HAD FURTHER OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS FLIGHTS AGREEMENT WITH USA DIVISION CHIEF BESSMERTNYKH AT FEBRUARY 17 SPASO RECEPTION FOR CODEL. BESSMERTNYKH CONFIRMED THAT ORAL ASSURANCES OF OUR INTENTIONS TO HONOR THE PROVISIONS OF THE AGREEMENT "AS BEFORE" (I.E., BEFORE GROMYKO'S ABORTED UN FLIGHT) WOULD ENABLE THE SOVIETS TO MOVE POSITIVELY ON NEXT U.S. REQUEST FOR AN AMBASSADORIAL SUPPORT FLIGHT. BESSMERTNYKH SAID IT WOULD BE BEST IF WE COULD PROVIDE SUCH AN ASSURANCE BEFORE WE SUBMITTED A REQUEST FOR THE AMBASSADOR'S FLIGHT. DCM SAID HE THOUGHT SUCH AN ASSURANCE WOULD BE NO PROBLEM. WE DO NOT CONSIDER IT IS THE U.S. WHICH HAS CAUSED THE DIFFICULTIES ON THE SPECIAL FLIGHTS. DCM USED OCCASION TO EXPLORE FURTHER THE QUESTION OF OUR DESIRE TO GET PERMISSION FOR A PLANE THAT WAS MORE USEFUL TO US FOR CARGO, MENTIONING OUR CONTINUED INTEREST IN THE L-100. BESSMERTNYKH WAS RELATIVELY RECEPTIVE TO THIS PROBE, ESPECIALLY WHEN INFORMED THAT THE PLANE WAS IN CIVILIAN LIVERY; HE

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URGED US NOT TO REFER TO THE PLANE AT ANY TIME AS A C-130, BUT ALWAYS TO USE THE CIVILIAN DESIGNATOR. DCM EMPHASIZED THAT IT WOULD BE PROHIBITIVELY EXPENSIVE FOR US TO MAKE ARRANGEMENTS FOR USING THIS PLANE IF IT WERE TO BE APPROVED ONLY ON A ONE-SHOT BASIS. WE WOULD THEREFORE WANT SOME INFORMAL UNDERSTANDING THAT FUTURE FLIGHTS COULD ALSO BE OPERATED BY THE L-100. BESSMERTNYKH SEEMED OPEN TO SUCH A PROPOSAL, ESPECIALLY WHEN DCM MENTIONED THAT IT COULD HELP PAVE THE WAY FOR THE BALTIMORE SHIP VISIT THE SOVIETS WANT IN THE SUMMER.

5. COMMENT AND ACTION REQUESTED: BOTH OF THE CONVERSATIONS REPORTED ABOVE TOOK PLACE BEFORE THE PALMER-ISAAKOV CONVERSATION MENTIONED REFTEL. OUR ASSESSMENT IS THAT THE WAY IS CLEAR FOR RESUMPTION OF SPECIAL FLIGHTS, BUT WE MUST ASSURE THE MFA (WHICH PROBABLY HAS TO OVERCOME GROMYKO'S RESIDUAL WRATH) THAT FUTURE SOVIET FLIGHTS, INCLUDING THOSE TO THE UN, WILL BE HANDLED AS IN THE PAST. ACTION REQUESTED: EARLY INSTRUCTIONS TO OFFER SUCH AN ASSURANCE, IN TIME TO CLEAR THE WAY FOR MID-MARCH SUPPORT FLIGHT FOR THE AMBASSADOR.

6. ON THE FURTHER PROBLEM OF GETTING THE SOVIETS TO AGREE TO A MORE USEFUL TYPE OF PLANE FOR THE EMBASSY, THERE ARE STILL SOME HURDLES TO BE CLEARED. WE ARE EXPLORING WITH THE AIR FORCE WHETHER THE CIVILIAN L-100 IS STILL A POSSIBILITY. IF IT IS, WE WOULD TRY ONCE MORE TO GET PERMISSION FOR IT TO FLY TO MOSCOW, DEFERRING AN ANSWER TO THE SOVIET SHIP REQUEST UNTIL SUCH PERMISSION IS GRANTED OR DENIED.
HARTMAN
END OF MESSAGE

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